

# The Centre of Competence for Humanitarian Relief of the University of Applied Sciences in Muenster, Germany

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## CENTRE OF COMPETENCE FOR HUMANITARIAN RELIEF MUESTER, GERMANY

Data and experience gathered from the humanitarian missions of the last decades show that autonomy and professionalism of the applicatory delegates in their respective fields of work are the most indispensable requirements<sup>1</sup>. The essential degree of professionalism is usually based upon comprehensive vocational or academic training and long lasting professional experience before joining any humanitarian organisation. For a successful participation in humanitarian missions senior professionals are required; being senior characters with the ability to independently perform and guide even under the most unfavourable conditions. We need autonomous senior technicians, engineers, midwives, nurses and doctors. Hence, the most effective preparation for becoming an effective member of a humanitarian team is excellent vocational or academic training at home and several years of relevant professional experience. In the humanitarian field we need engineers that can construct a bridge, surgeons that can perform operations and midwives that can deliver babies. Of course, as well as this sound professional base, additional special competencies are essential, such as humanitarian ethics, international humanitarian law, logistics, water and sanitation and so on. Regularly, these specific skills and competencies for humanitarian work are imparted by preparatory vocational courses given by the humanitarian organisations themselves beforehand. The principle of volunteering employment, combining professional experience with independence and not resting on a commercial basis, has already been addressed by Henry Dunant in his 1862 »A Memory of Solferino«<sup>2</sup>: »For work of this kind, paid help is not what is wanted.« Hence, the outstanding wishful thinking of a true humanitarian should always be that a necessity

will never occur whereupon he or she is called into any humanitarian mission.

Considering these core professional and moral preconditions and obligations, the University of Applied Sciences in Muenster / Germany refrained from creating just another special academic study and training course for humanitarian assistance but launched the Centre of Competence for Humanitarian Relief in 2001 for the coordination of all humanitarian activities of the scientific units of UAS Muenster and around.

Muenster University of Applied Sciences has a long tradition of education: founded in 1971 after the merger of public and private schools of engineering and vocational training institutions, it is now one of Germany's largest and most successful institutions of its kind, offering more than 60 degree courses for more than 10,000 students. Together, academics, staff and students make up the great research potential of Muenster University of Applied Sciences. Their strength lies in the diversity of their knowledge, their comprehensive experiences and their inquisitiveness.

Indebted to tradition and yet enthusiastic about innovation, research and development is conducted beyond the boundaries of the 12 faculties and 2 central scientific establishments in Muenster and Steinfurt. In co-operation with higher education institutions and research institutes all over the world and with partners in business, Muenster University of Applied Sciences is in constant pursuit of innovative solutions. Muenster University of Applied Sciences demonstrates its competence in research and its high standards of quality in six areas:

Construction | Environment | Resources  
Health | Life Sciences  
Product and Process Development  
Applied Social Sciences  
Company and Services Management  
Communication | Information

Each heading represents a multitude of application areas – a kind of construction kit containing around 70 individual units. From these, our clients can select the areas of competence relevant to their requirements. And yet this matrix is by no means a static entity. It is constantly being revised with respect to new developments in research and to the changing demands of the market<sup>3</sup>.

The aim of Muenster University of Applied Sciences is to be the top address for practical education and research. Quality pervades all areas within the univer-

sity. Quality sets the standards for our teaching, with our wide range of courses being oriented towards demand. Quality is the basis on which we achieve our excellent success in research – we have the highest rate of third-party funding of any German university. It is quality that inspires companies to enter into strategic alliances and partnerships with the university. It is also the hallmark of a finely tuned system of internal resource management. All these attributes characterise the image of this modern, high-performance and customer-oriented university<sup>4</sup>.

Our Mission Statement expresses the way in which the university sees itself. It is implemented at all levels and in all spheres of activity. Our cooperative style of leadership is an expression of our democratic self-conception. On this basis, and whilst fully aware of its social responsibility, the university follows **five maxims**:

› **Practice orientation**

Science-based learning and research are practice-oriented if they are in touch with the practical side of things. Our academic teaching is geared towards the demands of today's and tomorrow's occupational fields; researchers derive their topics from application-oriented problems. In the process, we take into account the expectations of practitioners, and have a shaping influence on them, too.

› **Interdisciplinarity**

The tasks of modern society are complex, and can only rarely be assigned to individual academic disciplines. The requirement for comprehensive solutions is that the manifold approaches of subject areas are brought together. Which is why interdisciplinary cooperation in teaching and research is a matter of course for us.

› **Interculturality**

Dialogue between different cultures requires open-mindedness towards the unknown and treating one another with respect. We overcome language and cultural barriers in our everyday work, and also belong to a global network of cooperation partners. Conveying the cross-cultural skills required for this is an equally important matter to us as integrating our international students.

› **Equal opportunities**

The university views the diversity of people as an enrichment. For this reason, we are strongly committed to ensuring comprehensive access to our offerings – regardless of gender, ethnic or social origin, religion, ideology, disability, age or sexual identity.

› **Commitment to service**

The actions and decisions taken by universities must be oriented towards the legitimate interests and needs of current and future students, employees and partners. For this reason, a strong service philosophy is an essential aspect of our culture of quality<sup>5</sup>.

The Centre of Competence for Humanitarian Relief is an embodiment and institutional materialisation of the University's maxims. Here, all humanitarian activities in the fields of practical work, research or fund raising are focused and bundled. Examples of the manifold applied research projects of UAS Muenster in the humanitarian field are sub-surface dams in Ethiopia<sup>6</sup>, epidemiology in Iran<sup>7</sup>, disaster management in Germany<sup>8</sup>, refugee health worldwide<sup>9</sup> and in Germany<sup>10</sup>, the humanitarian ethics and the responsibility to protect<sup>11</sup>.

Muenster, being the historical arena of the European Peace of Westphalia in 1648 and accommodating numerous universities is a unique location for humanitarian research and activities. The Centre of Competence for Humanitarian Relief offers courses and research topics to all faculties including the University School of Medicine and School of Law. Each semester, practical exercise courses are held in cooperation with the German Red Cross in order to acquaint students and researchers with scientific issues and practical problems of humanitarian assistance. Interested and eligible participants are then counselled to continue their professional education and career and are connected to internationally active humanitarian organisations for further delegate training programmes. ■

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## Abstract

### DAS KOMPETENZZENTRUM HUMANITÄRE HILFE DER FACHHOCHSCHULE MÜNSTER

Ein hohes Maß an beruflicher Professionalität und Eigenständigkeit ist die wichtigste Voraussetzung für eine erfolgreiche Tätigkeit im Bereich der internationalen Nothilfe. Diese Grundvoraussetzung kann nur durch eine praktische oder akademische Ausbildung und langjährige Berufserfahrung erworben werden. Durch die Einbindung ehrenamtlicher Expertise aus täglich gelebter Berufspraxis gelingt es, das erforderliche Maß professioneller Exzellenz in den verschiedensten Berufsfeldern für eine humanitär tätige Organisation sicherzustellen. Aufbauend auf berufliche Expertise vermitteln die Organisationen dann selbst die zusätzlich erforderlichen Fähigkeiten und Kenntnisse für eine erfolgreiche Tätigkeit in der Nothilfe. Die Möglichkeiten einer hauptberuflichen Tätigkeit in der Nothilfe sind auf Grund mangelnder Planbarkeitsstellen und der ja unbedingt erstrebenswerten Beschäftigungslosigkeit ausgesprochen begrenzt und problematisch. Die Fachhochschule Münster hat im Licht dieser fachlichen und sittlichen Notwendigkeiten bewusst auf die Schaffung eigener akademischer Bildungsprogramme im Bereich der Nothilfe und Entwicklungszusammenarbeit verzichtet und konzentriert sich vielmehr auf die allgemeine Ausbildung exzellenter Fachkräfte. Ihr Kompetenzzentrum Humanitäre Hilfe bringt im Lauf des Studiums den Studierenden aller Fachrichtungen Forschung und Lehre auf dem Gebiet der Nothilfe näher und stellt bei Interesse und Eignung die erforderlichen Kontakte zu den professionellen international tätigen Organisationen her.